India have been pushing for the conclusion and full operationalisation of the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) process started in 1993. India is also pushing for early finalization of the Draft Framework Treaty on establishing a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

Appointment of ESI Doctors

*434. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recruitment rules in respect of appointment of medical officers of ESI hospitals are proposed to be radically modified;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal and whether the proposal runs counter to the established norms of recruitment to Government/ autonomous agencies;

(c) whether prior approval of Government was obtained for the proposed modification; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI SAHIB SINGH VERMA): (a) There is no proposal for amendment of Recruitment Regulations of the Medical Officers, at present.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Action against officers

†*435. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in recent years a list of 2427 officials was prepared by the Central Vigilance Commission who were accused of corruption charges; and

(b) the number of persons out of them against whom cases have been initiated so far in the court of law?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(b) The CBI has filed charge-sheets against 460 officials in the court of law.

National Highways in Bihar

†*436. SHRI LALU PRASAD:

SHRI VIJAY SINGH YADAV:

Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State of Bihar has sent a proposal for improving the condition of 1200 kms. of roads out of the new roads declared recently as National Highways;

(b) if so, the action taken by the Ministry to upgrade the same; and

(c) by when this work would be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS [MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI]: (a) Proposals for improvement of 1,064 km of new roads declared recently as National Highways have been received.

(b) and (c) Ordinarily, under National Highways (Original) works, proposals for an amount equal to two and half times the allocation are sanctioned, including the balance cost of works in progress. With an allocation of Rs. 52.00 crore for Bihar, the ceiling limit of sanctions is Rs. 130.00 crore during the current year. At present, the value of sanctioned works is Rs. 169.15 crore.

28 Nos. of works have been sanctioned for improvement of 247.58 km length, including bridges on newly declared National Highways for a total estimated cost of Rs. 57.41 crore. The works are targeted to be completed by March, 2004.

Arrears of sugarcane growers

†*437. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 64 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 18th July, 2002 and state:

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†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.